

December 1, 1955

**Letter, Kim Yong-shik of the Korean Mission in Japan
to President Syngman Rhee**

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Summary:

Report on Japanese and international stance and discussions regarding fishery issue, with Kim's evaluation and prediction on the issue

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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

KOREAN MISSION IN JAPAN

Tokyo, December 1, 1955

Excellency:

I beg to acknowledge with appreciation the receipt of Your Excellency's letter dated November 25. I sent two cables to the Government in connection with the Japanese reaction to our Joint Chiefs of Staff statement issued two weeks ago.

I. As I reported previously, some conservative leaders of Japan hold strong opinions toward our JCS statement and are moulding the public opinion here against Korea. As a result representatives of the fishing industry started lobbying in preparation for the opening of the extraordinary session of the Diet slated for tomorrow (Dec. 2).

Prior to this about 30 staff members of the Western Japan fishery council met last week to discuss their 'counter-measures' to face the new situation. According to the press report they reached a decision to recommend their Government to sever economic relations with the Republic of Korea and also request the US Government to discontinue economic and other aid to the Republic of Korea, etc. They have also agreed to send a total of about 300 fishermen to Tokyo to stage demonstrations at the Diet, Foreign Office, US Embassy and this office. Therefore, it is expected that they will stage demonstrations here at this office early next week.

Separately, fishermen in Tottori Prefecture, West Japan facing the sea between Korea and Japan, called a meeting which was attended also by local Maritime Safety Board office. At the meeting they are reported to have resolved to send a number of fishing boats in groups escorted by Maritime Safety Board patrol boats to break into the Peace

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His Excellency
President Syngman Rhee

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Line for fishing operations. These patrol boats which, according to the press, are not armed, will function as watch-dog and signal the fishing boats for getaway, in case the Korean naval boats come in sight. It appears that this method was adopted because they believe that the speed of their vessels is faster than that of our naval boats.

In the midst of such atmosphere the Japanese Foreign Office is taking comparatively calm attitude, apparently in an effort to avoid any major dispute with us. The Foreign Office is now under fire from the fishing industry, and Diet sources who denounce it as being too weak-hearted. Indications are that the Foreign Office will take some kind of action, as soon as reply is received from our Government.

The Japanese Government has obviously studied every possible means; such as the severance of economic relations with Korea, as suggested by some Diet members. This is not in the least practical, because such action will only furnish good excuse for the Korean side to boycott the purchase from Japan even with ICA funds which is very lucrative to Japan. As the second method, the request for withdrawal of this office is conceivable. However, this again does not seem appropriate at the present stage in consideration of the existence of 600,000 Korean residents who will no doubt raise objection. Much publicized method of appealing to the United Nations also seems of little value, because the Japanese themselves are well aware of futility of resorting to such measure at the present stage. Under such circumstances the Japanese Government exerted itself to stage propaganda campaign overseas, emphasizing the point that Korea announced to shoot at unarmed fishing vessels.

Meanwhile, the statement made by General Lee Hyeng Keun that our Air Force will also be used to repel Japanese fishing boats violating the Peace Line, was reported by the local press.

In order to check Japanese propaganda I felt the necessity for giving the Japanese Government an early reply to their enquiry made the week before and thus I requested Government concurrence to the recommendations enumerated in my report dated November 24. I have taken due note of Your Excellency's cable instructions yesterday (Nov. 30), directing me to withhold the reply to the Japanese Government until further instructions.

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As I analyse the present situation, the Japanese Foreign Office does not consider time ripe for showdown with us yet. Their reasons are:

- a. Japan is giving the top priority to her UN membership application. Therefore, it is unwise from Japan's standpoint to have any trouble with neighboring countries which might have adverse effects on her efforts to win world sympathy,
- b. Japan wants to show the world as if she were peace-loving,
- c. Japan wants to accumulate her strength. She believes that her naval and air power is superior to ours, etc.

At any rate it seems certain that the Japanese Government is unlikely to take any action, including trade, until the reply in regard to our JCS statement is received from us. I am carefully watching the development in this regard.

The US side, so far, is not likely to do anything to step in for settlement of the current issue. It seems that the US is mainly interested in Japan's rearmament. In this regard I have just learnt through Reuter News Service that Washington sources believe that in case of open clash between Korean and Japanese vessels, the US Seventh Fleet would be asked to prevent such clash in the sea. Apparently this story came in the wake of an AFP report saying that all of our patrol boats were ordered to Pusan in anticipation of the crossing of the Peace Line by a fleet of Japanese fishing vessels escorted by Japanese patrol boats.

II. Turning to another subject, the Russo-Japanese talks in London seem to have lesser chance for success after the conservative merger materialized in Japan. It is mainly due to the participation into the government party of ex-Liberals who strongly insist upon continued friendly relationship between Japan and the US. This group is pressing the Japanese Government for return of South Kurile Islands from Russia in the above negotiations along with other islands.

Japan is keenly interested in the outcome of the 18-nation package application for UN membership now before the UN General Assembly in New York. According

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to the information, United Kingdom, alarmed by Red China's diplomatic offensive on the recent Macao issue, is strongly backing this package membership deal and is trying hard to influence the US for its successful passage in the UN (please see the report on my talks with Ambassador Tong under separate cover).

With sentiments of loyalty and esteem, I remain,

Most respectfully,

Byung Shik Keim